

Some not-finest hours of the Best and Brightest

--Tom Schelling on the "signalling" of the Tonkin Gulf attacks.

--Herman Kahn on not killing 100 million people, by accident. (October 1997: Dick Barnett told me on the way to Hampshire College, Symposium on Eqbal Ahmad's retirement, that Herman had said this to him in his office at ACDA in 1962, while trying to persuade ACDA to give Hudson Institute a contract for work on accidental war: "It may or may not be the right thing to do to kill a hundred million people. But it is always wrong to kill a hundred million people by accident." Barnett remembered that before he said the last two words Kahn started to laugh, and laughed so hard he choked. I told him I used to have this quote up on the wall by my door, on a 3x5 card, at RAND, above a card with the 1943 Himmler quote on remaining decent. (So evidently I had seen it reprinted somewhere; he's going to try to find the reprint.)

--Neustadt and May on lessons of Cuba II.

--May on bombing (North Vietnam); and background.

--(check) Janis on lack of groupthink in Cuba II.

--McGeorge Bundy on reasons to start Rolling Thunder.

--McGeorge Bundy on April 1, 1965 shift in Marine roles.

--July 28 decision on troops. (see Berman) (and Goodwin)
In particular, role of McNamara (Harvard's own, system analyst).

cf. [--(Goodwin on) Carl Van Doren and CBS officials.

cf. [--(Hilberg on) motives of SS and others: How Germans did it.

--What's left out of Allison, Garthoff, on Cuba II; what participants didn't know (e.g., Hersh; Garthoff; my analysis).

--October 27 transcript: what participants didn't imagine, consider. Their rebuke of JFK's desire to deal. Their secrecy and lies about this ever since. Role of McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, especially on Oct. 27.

--Secrecy and lies by Schles and Sorensen about Mongoose; and Diem assassination; Trujillo assassination; McNamara and Taylor proposals in 1961, for combat troops in Vietnam (Quagmire Myth); Cuba II (above).

cf. [--Glenn Paige's original work on Korea (and his later commentary).

--(Robert's comments on teaching about ethical problems of Germans, at Harvard; and on the example taught tacitly by Harvard teachers (and KSchool teachers!)

--Kennedy team advise and lie for Teddy on Chappaquiddick.

--Their unwillingness in 1969 to see Democrats blamed for ending the war in Vietnam. (Hence, my disillusion with them--"end of my love affair, loss of them, as fathers and brothers--leading to my self- and them-sacrificing decision to give Pentagon Papers (passive aggression? Taking them with me? Like my father?--only he was "obeying orders.")

--RNG, Schles, silence at the time--despite their dissent--about Cuba I; Mongoose; VN planning in 1964-65 (I asked RNG how he could have imagined that VN escalation was just a temporary aberration, even after RT and the troops; he said "Wishfulness, I guess."); LBJ's paranoia; support for pacification in 1966 ("I thought the most we could do then was to oppose further escalation"--and even then, he feels, coming out against the President on the war was regarded as unforgiveable, an irrevocable split, even before McCarthy/RFK campaigns in 1968).

--What were RFK's attitudes on the war in 1964-65? What would he have said if LBJ had negotiated out in 1965, following Ball's and de Gaulle's advice? (see LBJ in kearns, p. 252).

--HAK.

--McNamara on ABM in 68; failure to stop MIRV; (and see HAK on this: talk about systems analysis...); damage-limitation; failure to press test ban; F-lll!

--McNamara on Vietnam. McGeorge Bundy on RT in January and February, 1965. (Enthoven gets more credit; and Thomson--good example, along with RNG 1966 and 1968, Noam Chomsky,...Morton Halperin, 1969-73...

--Pusey on bombing of women's room: Bombing destroys the fabric of civilization...

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Problems with decision theory, systems analysis:

--Goleman: "Recent research suggests that all choices are made for emotional reasons; subsequent "decision-making" is just rationalization." (Harvard, October 4, 1988: to me)

"For emotional reasons" may mean: Unconsciously; for unconscious reasons; perhaps, unacknowledged, unacknowledgeable, denied reasons.

The operative impulses, desires, "preferences," need not therefore be incoherent, "violating axioms," or unstable/shifting. But let us suppose, both as the rule for bureaucracies and for individuals, that

--"preferences" for outcomes are secret/unconscious/unacknowledgeable (forbidden)/ denied.

--In particular, what are "lesser" evils, compared to "greater/greatest" evils. E.g., DK 259-60 "Losing the Great Society was a terrible thought, but no so terrible as the thought of being responsible for America's losing a war to the Communists. Nothing could possibly be worse than that." (early 1965).

--or, the degree of preference, the scale of the aim, the von Neumann-Morgenstern utilities; how high you really seek, what you would risk, what you would sacrifice (of your own other interests, your own pain or effort; or, more particularly, others'). Thus, "But the man who had been haunted for years by his first senatorial margin of eighty-seven votes wanted, not just any landslide, but the largest landslide in history. He wanted to prove that he was loved." DK 206 (Hence, Tonkin Gulf, etc. And see Schles, Jr. on JFK RFK and me: did DE want Goldwater to win in 64? Re whether JFK should have considered getting out of VN in 1962-63. JFK, too, was haunted by thin "win" in 1961; stolen, like, I presume, LBJ's.)

--Likewise, the basis for preferences over outcomes--the relevant dimensions, considerations, contingencies, strategies--are secret, etc. E.g., "politics," payoffs, blackmail; see, e.g., choice of General Dynamics for the F-111...; personal considerations, party; personal rivalries (RFK, for LBJ, see DK 200, or for McCarthy).

--Moreover, some of the alternatives are secret, denied: "covert." perhaps because illegal, immoral. (Covert action).

--Likewise, some real constraints, tabus, "intolerables," "unthinkables" are secret, along with the reasons for them and the authorities for them.

--The most-feared, intolerable accusations, to be averted, are private, secret (lest one expose one's own vulnerabilities, sensitivities, self-doubts, invite attack). (E.g., for LBJ in 1965, being denounced by RFK for quitting VN; particularly, charged with

being cowardly, unmanly...appeaser...(DKearns, 252-53, 259. Fear of RFK accusations of "everything LBJ hated in others (e.g., "betrayal") and feared in himself (e.g., "unmanliness"). 259.)). Intolerability of: losing an area to Communism; a negotiated outcome with Communists; coalition government with Communists; "But if I left that war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser and we would both find it impossible to accomplish anything for anybody anywhere on the entire globe." 252

--The structure of authority may be secret: Whose orders are being followed, by who, who is setting the "givens" of the problem. See the question of "who really ran the Watergate break-in? Who really ran the North Irangate operations?"

--"The problem," then, is to explain, justify, "arrive at" a decision or policy without revealing--to oneself, if above factors are "unconscious," or to certain others, bureaucratically/politically--the real considerations, expectations, aims, etc.

--One way to do this is by concealing and lying about real expectations; by pretending to be ignorant of or neglectful of certain "possibilities," likely events or outcomes or considerations; ignoring, or over-emphasizing others. E.g., Quagmire Myth (1961, 1965). Missile Gap (e.g., as McN's justification for 1000 Minutemen in Nov 1961).. Goodwin, in 1966 (and 1965? What did he say in his July draft speech? Me, in 1965), Vann as late as 1972, talking about "containing China."

--Another thing that must be concealed: the President's ("my") willingness to risk war, or other catastrophe: especially, for stakes that seem personal, illegitimate, disproportionately small, or for "corporate profit, interest,"...

--See FDR's risk-taking in the Pacific before Pearl Harbor! (Kearns, 253: "When Lyndon Johnson entered his fifth year in Congress, Roosevelt was increasing his active opposition to Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia because that area, with its rubber and tin, was thought [by who?] vital to America's interests [whose? what interests? "Vital"ness as necessarily secret, covert, lest it be seen as a willingness to risk or initiate war over what others might see as special interests, amounting, from a national point of view, to a "whim," a convenience, a privilege or minor profit).)

"In so doing Roosevelt risked, and helped precipitate, a Japanese attack."

Yet, this as a model, a lesson of experience, to a generation--of liberal Democrats, as well as Republicans; along with FDR's deviousness, both in Pacific and Atlantic; and his concealment of actual foresight (which, when revealed, suggested conspiracy and provocation!--not just risk-taking, or mistake as to the form that

a Japanese attack, which was expected, would take).

--Likewise--another Democrat, who likewise had promised to "keep us out of war" before the election, like FDR in 1940, LBJ in 1964--Wilson's maneuvers in early 1917, getting us into WWI.

--A central secret motive: To avoid blame, reproach. (Also secret: the intensity of this motive, the means one is willing to use, the costs and risks one is willing to impose on others, to achieve it.) like,